

"BASIC NECESSARY STEPS"

(FOR SUCCESS IN A CHRISTIAN LIFE)

The First Century Gospel Church/Philadelphia

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Living a successful Christian life is an important subject for everyone on earth to seriously consider, as each one strives "with my eyes fixed on the goal (as Apostle Paul said) I push on to secure the prize of God's heavenward call in Christ Jesus." (Phil.3:14).

A true Christian life begins by first believing God's Word about what His Son, Jesus Christ, accomplished for us on the Cross. God's Message about His only Son was given us through His Son (His Apostles who followed, and Moses and other Prophets before them). They all told of the coming 'Messiah' who would bring a 'Message of Salvation' from God. God's Message really means a promise of everlasting 'Life'... for everyone who will listen and believe on it. Believing the Message enables a person to accept it in their heart.

When a person willingly accepts God's Message, it allows for the Holy Spirit to take control of every action and decision in their life. Without the guidance of the Holy Spirit, no one can be made ready for Eternal Life. It is work of an indwelling Holy Spirit that sanctifies a person and prepares them to be worthy of God's Kingdom. Jesus told Paul (Acts 26:18) "I send you to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the obedience to Satan, to God, in order to receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance, among those who are sanctified through faith in Me."

That is why it's so important to understand and believe God's Message about the redeeming work that His Son accomplished for us on Calvary's Cross. We must believe to receive the Holy Spirit to be our guide. The Apostle reminded unbelieving and rebellious Jews (Acts 5:30-32) "The God of our forefathers has raised Jesus to life, whom you crucified and put to death. God has exalted Him to His right hand as Chief Leader and as Savior, to give Israel repentance and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses as to these things and so is the Holy Spirit which God has given to those who obey Him."

Jesus brought to us His Father's Message (about Himself) (John 12:44) "Jesus cried aloud, "He who believes in me, believes not so much in me, as in Him who sent me; and he who sees me, sees Him who sent me."

Multitudes came to hear Jesus! (Luke 12:1 says, tens of thousands), but (although they heard), many (most) were not listening (spiritually) and were not willing to follow Jesus Who was teaching them that we should follow His example (which means to obey His teaching, which are His commands), and so, enjoy the love He shows toward us. (John 15:10 Jesus said), "If you obey my commands, you will continue in my love, as I have obeyed my Father's commands and continue in His love." [It is by an enduring faith that the Spirit

enables us to obey the commands of Jesus Christ, and thus, continue within His grace and love, instead of 'falling away' from it.]

Instead of listening and being willing to obey (follow) Jesus, multitudes of people turned their backs on His teaching (just as most do today), and they left Jesus. They left Him to follow their own will of the self-life (which they were born with), rather than give that up to follow God's Message through His Son, Jesus Christ.

So, Jesus seriously warned those who came to hear Him, but who were not listening, (Luke 12:48), "He who sets me at naught and does not receive my teachings is not left without a judge: the 'Message' which I have spoken will judge him on the last day, [because His Message was also written down for everyone else to read (or hear), and to follow in life] (Vs.49-50) "Because I have not spoken on my own authority; but the Father who sent me, Himself gave me a command what to say and in what words to speak. And I know that His command is the Life of the Ages. What therefore I speak, I speak just as the Father has bidden me." (to speak).

The Apostle Peter gave 'God's Message' to Cornelius and his household, (Acts 10:). He did not commend them for any good deeds on their part. He just told them about what Jesus Christ had already accomplished for us on Calvary's Cross. And because they believed the 'Message' (which Peter referred to as the "Good News of peace through Jesus Christ"), the Bible says, that "the Holy Spirit fell on all who were listening to the Message". (They were not just hearing the message, they were also 'listening' and willing to follow Jesus' example of His obedience toward His Father. By their believing the Message, they had met 'God's condition to receive' the indwelling Holy Spirit in all His fullness.

God's Message given through His Son, teaches people how to be Christlike, so that a person can be a Christian 'light' to shine for others to see and follow (as Jesus said that we should). It contains teaching and examples of receiving perfect healing, enjoying good health, and the protection of our body. It also contains very solemn teaching (along with examples), on how to trust God financially, as well as to trust Him to be in control of the 'home life', so that 'His Peace' can be enjoyed. It teaches us not to avenge wrongs that are done toward us, but, that God is to avenge all injustices.

However, until one 'believes' God's Message to receive the Holy Spirit (as Cornelius' household did), the human nature of their heart does not let them follow those teachings. We were all born under the power of Satan and with the evil nature of self in us, so we must trust the Holy Spirit to take that 'self' from our heart. While having that evil nature in us, it would be impossible to find any true happiness in our life here on earth, or to get into Heaven. That evil nature (born in all of us), is the most terrible, wicked, deceitful character that we could have in us.

The Prophet Jeremiah described the human heart (meaning, the evil nature). He said (Jer.17:9), "The human heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." He explained that a person

having the evil nature in them, could not even know it (of themselves), for he also posed the question, "who could know it".

Nobody can know it because that deceitful nature lies deep within the human heart. Only God can search our heart for us, and that is why our commitment and surrender to Him must be sincere and without compromise. Then we can receive the indwelling Holy Spirit who will search out our heart and reveal where Satan is hiding. (Jer. 17:10), "I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings."

God also uses His Word to test our mind (when we read or hear His Word). (Heb.4:12-13) "For God's Message is full of life and power and is keener than the sharpest two-edged sword. It pierces even to the severance of soul from spirit, and penetrates between the joints and the marrow, and it can discern the secret thoughts and purposes of the heart. And no created thing is able to escape its scrutiny; but everything lies bare and completely exposed before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."

It is by knowledge of God's Word that we are to compare things (and our attitudes) with His Word. (2 Cor.13:5), "Test yourselves to discover whether you are true believers: put your own selves under examination. Or do you not know that Jesus Christ is within you unless you are insincere?" (or "unless of course you fail the test?")

People belonging to denominational Churches may sometimes say, "I am as good as anyone else" (the Pastor said). (Or), "I am as dedicated as any other church member. I pay my tithes and give some to the poor. I have a good chance (as any other church member), of being righteous in God's sight."

"Such professing Christians actually don't stand a chance of being declared righteous (if they remain in that spiritual condition). Honesty, sincerity, and outward actions is not true Christianity. Those surface actions never take anybody to Heaven. They are not 'faith in action'. The only thing that will open the way into Heaven, is for a person to follow the divine plan laid down in God's Word for living a true Christian life" of faith and trust, (which was given by the very humble example of the Savior, Himself. He did not avenge wrongs, did not trust in medicine, nor even have anything laid-up for tomorrow). We have Bible examples to make it even more understandable, and perfectly clear to us, how easy and effectually it will work out, if we follow Christ's humble example.

It takes three things to make a genuine Christian, ... which includes getting completely and entirely rid of that inborn evil nature (and all the influence of the devil). All three things must take place in the true Christian's life.

The first is, 'the Pardon and Cleansing of Sin', which is our Blood-bought right to have, because it was done for us on the Cross. We have to 'believe' for that privilege, however, ... the same as we are to 'believe' on God for everything else in our 'life of faith'

and total dependance on Him. Our 'Pardon and Cleansing of Sin' is just one step.

Jesus said, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "A vast number of religious people arrive at the conclusion that when Jesus said if a person was born again, and pardoned and cleansed, . . . they would enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Because of that assumption, they think that everyone who was 'born again', was sure to go to Heaven."

"The teaching 'Once saved, always saved', started that delusion from that particular verse (the late Pastor said). It is similar to the belief of other groups of 'Holiness people'. The first question they ask when they see you, is, "have you been born again?" . . . (while at the same time they reject the true Bible teaching" of faithful endurance and spiritual growth). We may hear professed Christians in the world asking each other, "are you saved?", or "was he (or she) saved?", or we will hear, "yes, he (or she) was saved". At the same time the majority of them ignore God's many warnings through Jesus Christ and His Apostles, . . . that is, we must be careful not to be deceived, and, to not fall away from 'faith in Christ'.

However, we very seldom see any 'fruits of repentance', or any real commitment to follow God's Word, nor do we hear of them doing God's Will, by trusting on His Son (instead of depending on human plans and efforts).

"That is positive proof that they have not actually been 'born again' (nor pardoned and cleansed from sin). They only have a theoretical knowledge of some passages of Bible text, but no real genuine change of heart, nor any pardon and cleansing from sin. Their smooth and persuasive talk is very deceitful, and it is human effort. In reality, it just proves that they are still under the control of the old evil nature (that every human was born with)."

"They trust in the ways and plans of man for things and have not learned to trust God even for food for their table, nor to trust Him to heal the slightest pain in their body (because of their 'lack of faith' and unbelief). That in itself is positive proof of such people being in a delusion, under the control of the devil, and the old evil nature inherited from Adam. Trusting in other things (or people) is unbelief in God (in reality) and is the sin of idolatry (one of the worst sins, as Paul explained in his letters). If one cannot trust on God's promises for lessor things in this life, how could they expect to trust Him for their Salvation, and for the Holy Spirit to prepare them spiritually to meet Jesus Christ when He comes again for His true believers?

It would be just as unrealistic to say, that because a boy was born in the United States of America, he was sure to become President (because he is a male citizen born in the United States. Many a male citizen was born in this country and yet did not reach the Presidency. Those 'Holiness' and 'Once saved always saved' people who think we only have to be verbally 'born again' to get to Heaven, haven't the slightest chance for it (without a true

repentance). They don't define God's Word right, nor do they give a correct definition of 'Salvation by grace through an enduring faith (as the late Pastor said).

Nicodemus was a Jewish teacher, but with that old evil nature still in him, he could not define God's Word (due to not having the Holy Spirit), for Jesus said, that the Holy Spirit is not for the unbeliever. Nicodemus did not know a thing about God's Truth, and he could not trust God for anything. That is why Jesus told him that he needed to take the 'first step' in the divine life. Jesus repeated that Nicodemus needed to be 'born again', to receive the new birth; (which would be complete change of 'heart attitude'). Then God's Spirit could work in his life.

Astonished by this true meaning of Scripture, Nicodemus asked, "How is it possible for a man to be born when he is old?" (He had no idea of what it meant to be 'born again of the Spirit'.)

Many outwardly sincere people (being ignorant of the true condition of their heart), think they are full of faith, when in-reality they are full of unbelief (which is the most grievous of all sins). Many people of the world think that they have to feel an "experience" to receive and have the Holy Spirit. But that is not the way the Holy Spirit works. Jesus told Nicodemus (John 3:8) "The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it is going; so is it with everyone who has been born of the Spirit." (9-10) "How is all this possible?" asked Nicodemus. "Are you," replied Jesus, "'the Teacher of Israel,' and yet do you not understand these things?"

We all need to realize that outward "experiences" can be used by the devil to distract a person away from real spirituality, and to have them to think that they are a spiritually better person (as Nicodemus did), because of their outward religion. Outward piety is spiritually harmful to true spirituality (regarding right choices and decisions in one's life), (which are to be inspired by the Holy Spirit from within a person's heart, ... not by outward gestures to prompt a spiritual 'experience'). As Jesus explained, one must be 'born again' of the Spirit'.

The 'Holiness' groups (and 'Once save always saved' people) who think we only have to be born again to get to Heaven, have not the slightest chance for Heaven (without a true repentance). (Without the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit), they do not define God's Word right, nor do they give the correct definition of His Word.

Everyone must be aware of the imminent 'spiritual danger' of their false teaching given in their many books, tracts, (and any other publishing), because the devil is playing for keeps, to take your soul to the Lake of Fire. Jesus warned us of the teachers of false doctrines, saying, "beneath that 'disguise' they are ravenous wolves. By their fruits you will easily recognize them."

The next thing to take place to become a genuine Christian is also only a step. It is not the entire Christian life, and it does not give anyone a through ticket to Heaven, but it is a very important and valuable step toward Heaven. This second step is a

total commitment of our life to have an enduring faith on God's Word, for His 'will' to be done in our life, and for His Word to be our 'rule of life'. (Rom.12:1-2 says it best, "I beseech (earnestly implore) you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

So, to be 'born again', and then to make a 'total commitment' to follow Christ (as if we are a 'living sacrifice'), are only two steps, but they pave the way for the third and most important of all steps, and that is to have the 'self-life' removed from our heart. That third step... must take place, for a person to enter God's Kingdom, but steps one and two need to be carried out first in our life. We first must 'believes' and 'repent' to be 'born again', and to then make a sincere and 'total commitment' to follow Jesus Christ's example for us to trust God for all aspects of our life, so that we can have Him remove 'self' from our heart. (Which we must allow Him to do, so that we can indeed be "born again of the Spirit" (as Jesus said must take place for us to be perfected in Christ and prepared for Eternal Life.) (John 3:3) "unless a man is born anew, he cannot see the Kingdom of God."

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S47R/SOME MAIN POINTS: are, ...

1. Believing and accepting God's Message (sent through His Son), enables a person to begin a successful Christian life, and should inspire true repentance and baptism to receive the Holy Spirit.
2. Listening to God's Message about His Son, believing it, and having a willingness to follow that teaching, enabled people in Bible times to receive the free gift of the Holy Spirit.
3. A choice on our part to make a sincere commitment to Christ, is what allows us to be 'born again' of the Spirit (Jesus said we must).
4. It is the sanctifying work that indwelling Spirit which will remove the nature of 'self' from our heart, and that is the most important thing that 'must' take place in the life of every believer. Having the 'self-life' removed is the only way that one can be 'perfected in Christ', and prepared for Eternal Life.

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